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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

April 2008

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The April luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, April 17, 2008, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Woody Falgoust of Thibodeaux, LA., who will be speaking on his book *Cajun Mariners*. Reservations may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, April 16, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people. The price of the lunch is \$7.00.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Positive changes continue at your Historical Society. Through the generous donation and efforts of local landscape artist Russell Williams, the Lobrano House garden is coming back...bigger and better. We've got curb appeal again! Thank you, Russell.

Additional interior changes are in the mix too. Thanks to the hard work of our publicity director, Linda-Lou Nelson, the Historical Society has obtained some additional MDAH grant money to make long needed repairs on the original portions of the Lobrano House. A contract has been signed for the project so expect to see some work begin soon. Thank you, Linda-Lou.

Our Thursday luncheon meetings continue to be well attended. This is not surprising given the always interesting speakers and

A PRIMA DONNA IN BAY SAINT LOUIS

Edited by
Eddie Coleman

"Either in 1888 or 1889 an early morning L & N mail train, approaching Bay St. Louis over the bridge, lost a section of a wheel in the bay and was compelled to stop at Bay St. Louis for hours while the repair was made.

"Captain Toulme [J. V. Toulme, former mayor of Bay St. Louis], who then operated the Crescent Hotel, was immediately notified to feed and take good care of all the train's passengers until they could be carried on through to New Orleans.

"Captain Toulme agreed, and Mrs. Toulme almost fainted. With a whole trainload of people suddenly to accommodate and feed and frantic for lack of food and competent help, Mrs. Toulme desperately sent out hurried calls to good friends and good neighbors who responded gallantly and promptly.

"One of the impromptu waitresses on that historic occasion was the wife of U. S. Congressman E. J. Bowers, who was terrified at the temperamental invectives (most of them in French and most of which she understood) hurled at all and sundry by one of the obviously distinguished and also obviously enraged female passengers.



Sarah Bernhardt

"In the clatter and confusion that accompanied the serving of the really excellent food, Mrs. Bowers finally discovered that the irate personage was none other than the Divine Sarah Bernhardt herself, surrounded by her equally distinguished but heartily eating cast. Ms. Bernhardt was in a blue rage. Her schedule had been shattered by an inconsiderate, ungallant piece of iron!

"But on the same train enroute to California and at the same table opposite the seething Bernhardt was a quiet man accompanied by his family, who it was much later discovered was the equally famous Maurice Thompson, well-known author of the then popular novel *Alice of Old Vincennes*.

"As much as the world's greatest actress was perturbed, the

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Eddie Coleman, Editor
Linda-Lou Nelson, PublisherPublished monthly by the
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equally renowned writer was enthralled.

"It was this accidental stop-over at Bay St. Louis that caused him to cancel the California trip and spend all winter at Bay St. Louis. ...[I]t was in Bay St. Louis that Maurice Thompson wrote his popular *King of Honey Island* with scenes laid in that section between Carroll and Ulman Avenues and along the beach.

"The Thompson family visited the Bay for many years, and the author himself often admitted that most of his famous novels were written at the old Crescent Hotel."

[Editor's note: This article was originally printed in the July 29, 1958 (?) edition of the Daily Herald, early name of The Sun Herald.]

**TURTLE FARM
IS****SUCCESSFUL**Edited by
Eddie Coleman

Alfred A. Ulman was mayor of Waveland and founder of the Ulman Woolen Mills which once stood on Nicholson Ave. He established the community of Ulmanville located on the present Jeff Davis Avenue to provide home sites for workers at his mill. An enterprising man, he also established a turtle farm to raise Gulf Island terrapins for sale as edible delicacies. Apparently, he conceived the idea after learning that a Maryland Senator owned such a business raising diamond-back terrapins. Supposedly, the "costly, gout-engendering luxuries [were] expected concomitants to any respectable feast in the country around Washington [D.C.]." The following paragraphs recount his turtle venture.

"In the Bay St. Louis suburb of Ulmanville, Mr. A. A. Ulman, a leading citizen of the place, has developed a novel industry.

"The celebrated Gulf Island terrapins are just as good as Maryland diamond backs, tasteful Creole gastronomists and bon vivants generally know. In this seacoast terrapin-rearing establishment, the proprietor procures his parent stock from the sand islands, southward, from terrapin-hunting men and dogs.

"In a large enclosed pond, well palisaded, there are nearly one thousand grown terrapins nursing little terrapins, which on reaching maturity will be shipped to Baltimore, New York, Washington, and other cities and sold for one dollar a head, or tail, whichever end may be emerging from the shell at the time they meet the purchaser's eye. In the same cities, there is an eager market for a thousand times the number annually shipped from the Mississippi seacoast.

"It might be well to suggest that this appears to be a promising business, and, as the gentleman said to his speculative friend who proposed to send over to Italy for a lot of gondolas for the lake in Central Park, 'It would be just as well to get a pair and let them breed,' as terrapins (not gondolas) are very prolific."

SOURCE: Wilkinson, R. A. "Letters Written for the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*" in *The Gulf Coast*, pub. The Passenger Department, Louisville & Nashville Railroad.

**VALENA C. JONES
MEMORIAL
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH**By
Scott Bagley

This is the fourth in a series on historic churches in Hancock County. This month we return to the Bay St. Louis area with a look at the Valena C. Jones Memorial

United Methodist Church located at 248 Sycamore Street.

Between 1865 and 1882, the predominately white Methodist Episcopal parent church faced the problem of what should be done with freed slaves in the South, who were increasing in number and who wanted and needed equal representation in, among other things, places of worship. In 1880, in a small building on Washington Street in Bay St. Louis, a small group of energetic black women, fifteen years after receiving freedom from slavery, founded what was then called the St. Paul Methodist Episcopal Church. Among the founders were Ellen Kelly, Blanche McArthur, and Edith Ross. These three women and others proceeded to seek out leaders and to use the existing skills and abilities of other black people in the area to develop a religious and educational training program.

The efforts of these founders were successful as attendance at worship services and Sunday School increased regularly, and it was soon apparent that the small building on Washington Street was not large enough. In 1882 a new building was constructed on Sycamore Street or, as it was then called, Good Children Street. The leadership of, among others, Thomas Meggs, William Kelly, John Marshall, Albert Whaley, and the Reverend O. H. Flowers made this new building possible. At the time of the construction of the new church, St. Paul had an active membership of more than seventy-five adult members.

In spite of certain continuing discriminatory practices regarding black members by the Mississippi Methodist Conference, St. Paul continued to increase its membership helped by the leadership of pastors O. H. Flowers, W. A. Cannon, J. E. Holmes, and A. H. Lathan. From 1908 to 1910 records



Valena C. Jones Memorial United Methodist Church
246 Sycamore St., Bay Saint Louis, MS

reflect that Prince Albert Taylor, Sr., served St. Paul's as pastor and it was during his time that a large hurricane did significant damage to the church's parsonage.

In 1922 the church purchased additional property on Sycamore Street from Joe Rosetta and the Reed family. It was on this site in 1926 that a new church was built. The building committee membership included, in addition to its chairman, Bishop Robert E. Jones of the Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Frank Fox, Wesley Holmes, Edward Lee, Robert Squires, Moses Lathan, Wiley Daniels, A. Bennett, and D. Robinson. The Reverend Amos L. Holland was pastor at this time. Joseph Labat was both the architect and contractor for the new building.

The new church was dedicated to and named for Valena C. Jones. Mrs. Jones, a daughter of one of the founders of St. Paul's, was born on August 3, 1872, in Bay St. Louis. She began teaching in schools in rural Mississippi

about 1890 and became the principal of the Bay St. Louis Negro School in 1892 followed by a period of public school teaching in New Orleans. Mrs. Jones died in New Orleans at the age of forty-four in 1917. Several public schools were named in her honor including one in Bay St. Louis.

Mrs. Jones was the wife of the abovementioned Bishop Robert E. Jones of New Orleans, who became the first black bishop to be elected as General Superintendent of what was the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Jones fulfilled a dream to establish a religious resort for black people in the South by organizing ministers and lay people to fundraise in order to purchase more than three hundred acres, much of it facing the Gulf of Mexico, in Waveland. In 1924 a building was constructed, and Bishop Jones named the site the Gulfside Chatauqua and Camp Meeting Ground. Later, this historic campus was called the Gulfside Methodist Assembly. Gulfside Assembly was dedicated on August 31, 1927, on

the premises of the old Andrew Jackson, Jr., house.

The newly named Valena C. Jones Church on Sycamore Street continued to garner recognition as a vibrant congregation. Records reflect that the church hosted the Annual Mississippi Conference in 1936 and provided music for these annual conferences at Gulfside Assembly in 1932, 1934, and 1936. Additionally the church was selected as the laboratory for Church School Leadership Training Programs for several summers.

Enhancements to the church continued through the years, including the addition of oak pews in 1953 under the pastorate of the Reverend J. P. Johnson. In 1982 a building program was launched to expand the facility under the leadership of the Reverend Arthur "Soul Preacher" Lewis, who served not only as pastor but as "builder, fund raiser, counselor, teacher and carpenter." Completed in 1985, the new addition was named the "Grace F. Polloade Fellowship Hall" in honor of Grace Polloade, longtime member and teacher at the church. In 1991 the parsonage was renovated and dedicated to the

memory of Mrs. Brunetta Young Daniels, another faithful, lifetime member of the church.

During 1991 a volunteer mission group from the Wisconsin United Methodist Conference partially renovated the sanctuary followed by a cash donation to help complete the renovation. Also in this same year, a church youth group from Houston helped renovate the old parsonage into a livable structure. On September 19, 1993, the church celebrated a "homecoming" made possible by several fundraisers.

Like most other churches in the area, Hurricane Katrina took its toll on this church. As a result of the storm rather significant repair and renovation were required. With the help of multiple and gracious church groups from various locations, the parish hall and kitchen were renovated as were other parts of the church including new windows in the sanctuary and a new air conditioning system. The antiquated electrical system was also replaced. Even with the renovation, however, the church remains looking much as it has for the many

years it has provided a warm and active church home for so many people. The 1880 founders would be proud.

(The material for this article came from the 1993 Valena C. Jones Homecoming Program as well as Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain by Robert Scharff. The author also wishes to thank Evelyn Wells of the Valena C. Jones Memorial Methodist Church who provided help with this article.)

BOOKS FOR SALE AT LOBRANO HOUSE

Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

Heritage Cookbook
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A collection of our members' favorite family recipes

Holly

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Katrina Cookbook

By Charlet Russell (\$19.95)

A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

Mississippi's No-Man's Land

By Marco Giardino, Ph.D., and Russell Guerin (\$10.95)

The story of the Koch family, early settlers of Hancock County, and their experiences during the Civil War, based on their letters

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Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Sink or Be Sunk

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Sanctuary of
Valena C. Jones Memorial United Methodist Church

President's Message (Continued from
p. 1)

wonderful food prepared by Michelle Nichols. Remember to put this date on your monthly calendars and...reservations are required.

I'll close with my usual refrain cast in a bit different way. Ask what you can do for your Historical Society.

Scott Bagley



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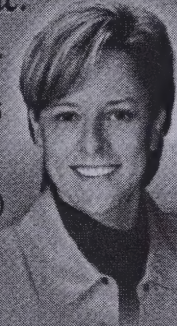
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Saturday, April 12: Mississippi Mudfest
4-8 P. M.

Jo Rusin seatweaving demonstration
5-7 P. M.

Saturday, April 19: Earth Day
12:00-6:00 P. M.

Friday, April 25: "Poem in My Pocket Day"
All Day - Come and share your poems.

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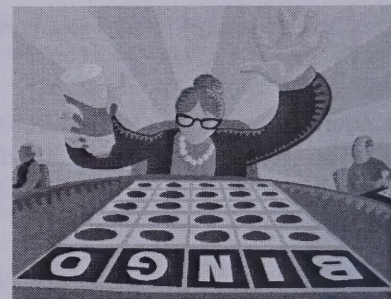
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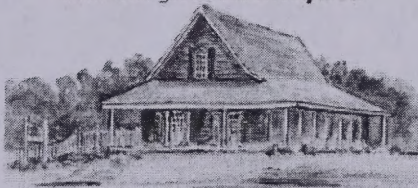
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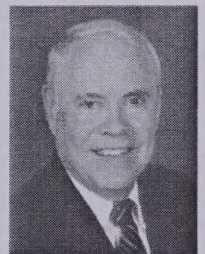
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